

OBITUARY

KEN NEWBEY (1936-1988)

Kenneth Raymond Newbey, a member of the Club and one of the most respected authorities on the plant life and ecology of the State's southwest, died at too early an age at Perth on July 23, 1988. His death was the result of a heart virus contracted many years earlier. When the medical condition resulting from this viral infection precluded heavier duties on his farm Ken turned his attention to studying the native flora.



Figure 1. Ken Newbey photographed on a field trip in the Stirling Range National Park, February 1962. (Photograph courtesy Dr J.S. Beard.)

Ken Newbey was born at Katanning on June 11, 1936. His early years were spent on the family farm at Ongerup. During the early 1960s Ken came to the attention of the staff of the Western Australian Herbarium when he submitted voucher specimens for seed collections he was making. Ken had an association with Alf Gray of Albany, a well-known seed collector and propagator and one-time partner in Yilgarnia Wildflower Nursery with prominent forester of the northwest and nurseryman Fred Lullfitz. In February 1962 the newly appointed director of Kings Park, Dr J.S. Beard, visited the Albany area to acquire seed for the botanic garden's nursery. During an excursion to the Stirling Range National Park Alf Gray introduced Dr Beard to a young and enthusiastic protege by the name of Ken Newbey (Fig. 1). Over the years Ken's reputation as a meticulous field collector grew as he began to make exhaustive studies of the plants of the southwest. In 1969 his reputation was further enhanced by the publication of Part 1 of *West Australian Plants for Horticulture* published by the Society for Growing Australian Plants.

In 1973 after gaining a matriculation by part-time correspondence studies, Ken applied for direct entry to Murdoch University's M. Phil. degree programme. It is not surprising that this application was strongly supported by, among others, Professor Jack Loneragan, in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences. In 1980 Ken graduated with a thesis entitled *The Vegetation of Central South Coastal Western Australia*. From this point Ken vigorously pursued a number of research projects principally in the field of vegetation studies. Notable among these projects were his contributions to the biological survey of the Goldfields and the vegetation map and survey of the Fitzgerald River National Park.

His professional expertise aside, Ken made an outstanding contribution with his unique ability to translate ecological concepts into practical realities. He was a tireless worker for raising the conservation ethic in the farming community and for attempting to initiate a responsible approach by government to the release of new land for agriculture. It was Ken's farming background that gave credibility to his concerted attempts to focus attention on what was happening to the agricultural lands of the southwest. In recognition of Ken's botanical endeavours and ability to communicate scientific information to community groups he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 1987 to study international Biosphere Reserves. It was during the early phase of this overseas study tour that Ken's health suddenly deteriorated and he was forced to curtail his trip and return to W.A. With uncertainty about the prognosis of his medical condition Ken was as usual incredibly pragmatic in his approach. He contacted colleagues about ongoing research projects, attempted to finalise papers in progress and talked enthusiastically about all the ideas he had for the future. And then suddenly he was no longer with us. His passing left colleagues and friends with a sense of deep regret that such an early and untimely death had robbed the State of one of its most dedicated students of natural history.

Although Ken is sadly no longer with us, he will be remembered for his outstanding contribution to the State's natural history and commemorated in the plant names *Acacia newbeyi*, *Grevillea newbeyi*, *Eucalyptus newbeyi* and *Thysanotus newbeyi*. He is survived by his wife Brenda and three sons.

— K.F. Kenneally

